

XX.—*On the Occurrence of Balæniceps rex on Lake Victoria.*

By Sir HARRY JOHNSTON, K.C.B., G.C.M.G., F.Z.S.

WHEN I first reached the shores of the Victoria Nyanza in the late autumn of 1899, I was informed by Mr. Hobley, then Collector for the Elgon District, who was residing on the shores of Kavirondo Bay, that the Shoe-bill or Whale-headed Stork was occasionally seen on the north-eastern shores of the Victoria Nyanza. I believe that the same information was given to me by other Europeans also. When I reached the country of Uganda proper, I questioned Mr. F. J. Jackson on the subject, but he said that he had never heard of the bird being found anywhere nearer than the Nile marshes about Lake Kioga. Just about this time we had both been told of the *Balæniceps* having been shot on the Victoria Nile near Lake Kioga by Captain Ponsonby, of the Uganda Rifles.

One Sunday in the month of March, 1900, my collector, Doggett, and my brother, Mr. Alexander Johnston, went out in the afternoon for an excursion in my large Uganda canoe. In the marshes about five miles to the west of the Entebbe Peninsula they saw a couple of Whale-headed Storks, one of which Doggett succeeded in shooting. Subsequently he returned to the same locality—the marshy coast-line of the Lake to the west of the Entebbe peninsula—and shot two more specimens. I also permitted two more of these birds to be killed by Captain Rattray and Mr. Guy Eden respectively. Captain Rattray's bird was given by him to Mr. F. J. Jackson for his collection. When these specimens had been procured I placed *Balæniceps* on the Protected List. I have subsequently heard of the bird having been seen by credible witnesses on the west coast of the Victoria Nyanza as far south as the Kagera River. A German officer also told me that it was met with on the German coast, just south of the Kagera, but he did not think that it extended its range so far as the south coast of the Victoria Lake. On the east coast it seems to be found as far south as the vicinity of Kavirondo Bay. Personally, I confess that it is a little difficult to understand why its range should not include all

the shores of the Victoria Nyanza, and why the bird should not extend its area (which at present includes Lake Albert) to the Albert Edward and the waters of the Upper Congo. I myself certainly believe that I saw a *Balæniceps* in 1882 on the swamps of the Upper Cunene River, in about 15° south latitude, at the back of Portuguese Angola. Sir H. M. Stanley was wont to assert that he had seen the bird on the extreme Upper Congo. But neither he nor I have been able to advance any further proofs in support of our belief. I was much impressed by the vast numbers of water-fowl which displayed themselves on the northern and eastern shores of Lake Albert Edward, where from a picturesque point of view the display of birds was magnificent; but I never noticed amongst the many kinds of waders anything like *Balæniceps rex*, nor could the natives inform me that it was seen there. It is undoubtedly common at the back of Busoga on the great swamps and marshy lakes which are attached to the system of the Victoria Nile. *Balæniceps* is often seen at the north end of Lake Albert, and thence north-west to within a hundred miles or so of Khartum.

Curiously enough, none of the Europeans residing in the Uganda Protectorate, missionaries or officials, had ever noticed this remarkable bird on the shores of the Victoria Nyanza before Mr. Doggett shot the first specimen; and this fact is the more singular when we remember what an ardent and all-searching collector is Mr. F. J. Jackson, C.B., who has done so much to enrich our National Collection. Nevertheless this failure to distinguish *Balæniceps* must have been due to a pure oversight, and not, as some people have argued, to the fact that the bird had only recently extended its range to the shores of the Victoria Nyanza from the Upper Nile. That this is not the explanation may be shown from the facts that the bird has a well-known name—"Būluë"—in the Luganda tongue, and that the natives of Uganda tell me that it was always known to their forefathers and was a familiar object in the marshes. The natives differ somewhat in their accounts as to its breeding-habits, but are agreed for the most part that it makes an untidy unwieldy nest on

low trees near the swamps. Some say that it builds in the branches of the gouty Ambatch trees, which do not rise to more than fifteen feet above the water's edge.

I have transmitted two specimens of *Balæniceps*, a male and a female, to the British Museum, both obtained on the shores of the Victoria Nyanza in 1890. (See Dr. Sharpe's List, above, p. 103, also Ibis, 1901, p. 156.)

## XXI.—*Notices of recent Ornithological Publications.*

[Continued from p. 163.]

### 40. *Andersen on Birds from the Færoe Islands.*

[Sysselmand H. C. Müller's Haandskrevne Optegnelser om Færøernes Fugle. I. Uddrag ved Knud Andersen. Vidensk. Medd. Kbhvn. 1901, pp. 217-252.]

An account is given of the field-notes made by the late Sysselman H. C. Müller on birds observed in the Færoe Islands from 1863 to the time of his death in July 1897. They refer to 123 species, and are arranged in systematic order.

### 41. *Babson on the Birds of New Jersey, U.S.A.*

[Bulletin of the Bird Club of Princeton University. Vol. i. No. 1. September 1901.]

The first number of the Bulletin of the Bird-Club of Princeton University is appropriately devoted to a list of the birds of the vicinity, which is defined as a circular area of about eight miles radius around the town. The list contains the names of 253 species, with short remarks added to each of them. The "permanent residents" in this part of New Jersey are only 31, whereas the summer residents, which come from the south to breed, are 70. We remark that the House-Sparrow is noted as "abundant as ever," and as having lately taken to driving away the Rough-winged Swallow (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) by seizing on its nesting-places.